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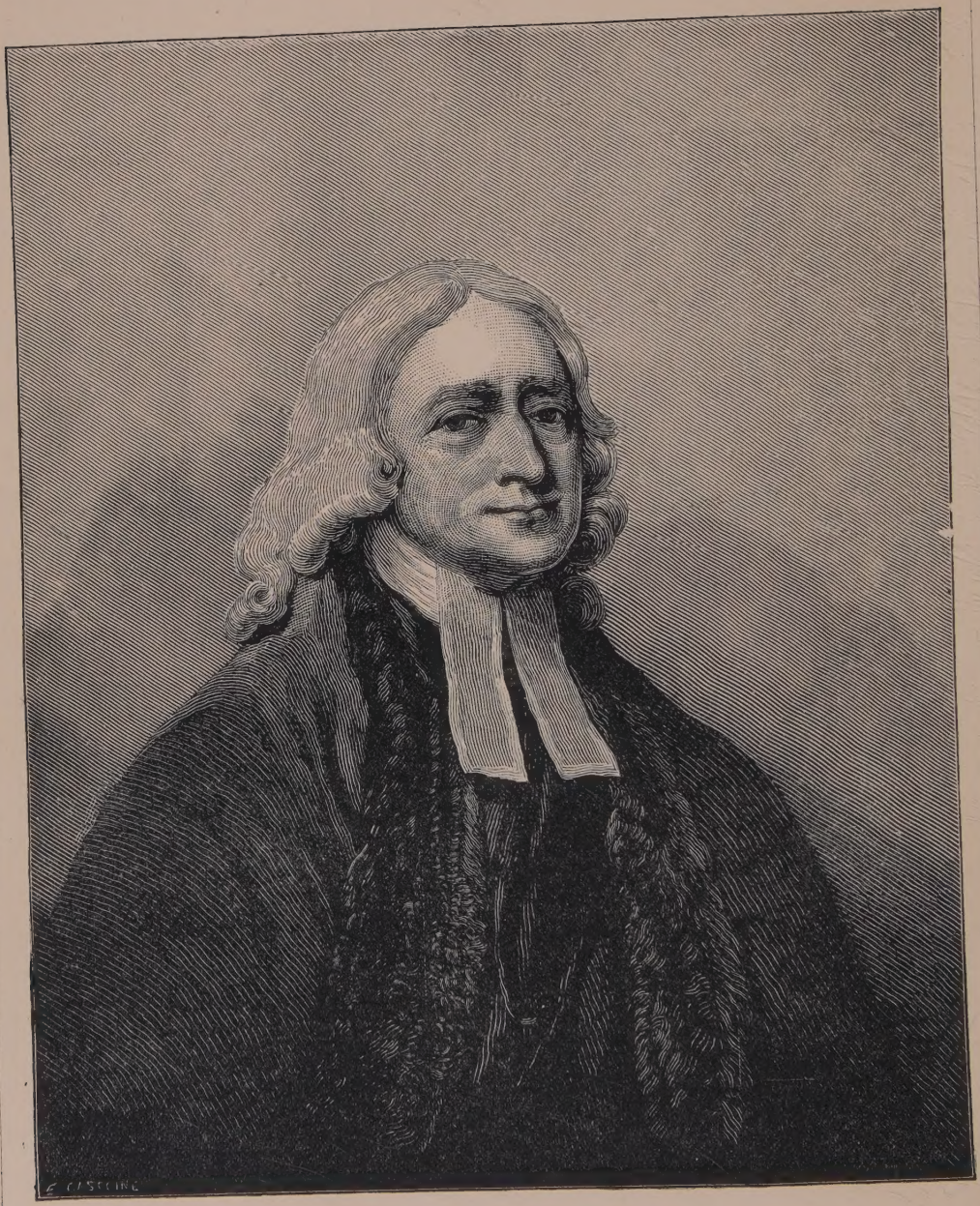


John Wesley

THE FATHER OF METHODISM;

OR,

The Life

OF THE

REV. JOHN WESLEY, M.A. [1703-1791]

WRITTEN FOR CHILDREN.

BY

NEHEMIAH CURNOCK, SEN. [1840-1915]

"God gave the Word, and great hath been
The preachers' company;
What wonders have our fathers seen,
What signs their children see!"

Centenary Hymn.

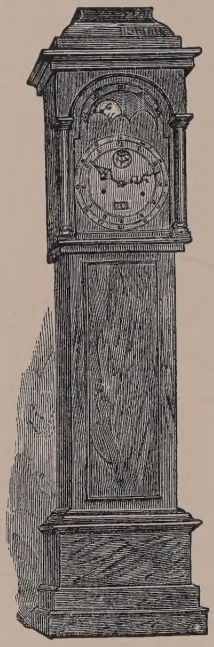
FOURTH EDITION.

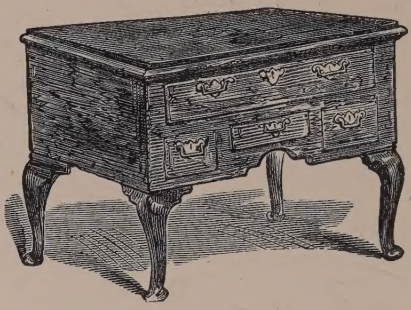
LONDON:

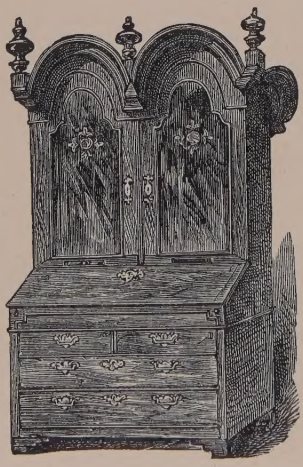
CHARLES H. KELLY, 2, CASTLE STREET, CITY ROAD, E.C.;

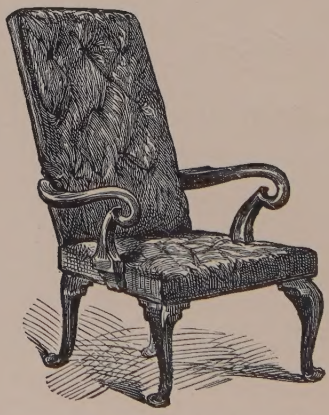
AND 26, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

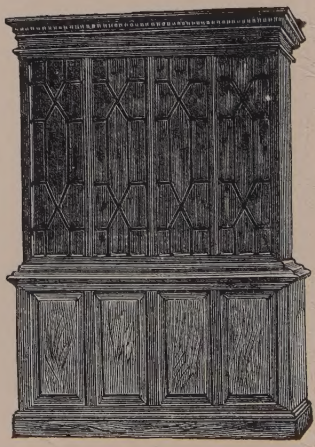
1903.











FURNITURE USED BY JOHN WESLEY, NOW IN HIS HOUSE, NO. 47, CITY ROAD, LONDON, E.C.

CITY-ROAD CHAPEL.

PREFACE.

MY father worked throughout his ministry for the children. He was known far and wide as the "Children's Preacher." His last service on earth was a children's service.

This little book, which I have been requested to edit for republication as the Children's Bi-Centenary Life of the Father of Methodism, was written by him many years ago. He desired that it should be short and simple. This desire I have scrupulously regarded. In reading the chapters, I have often been tempted, as he was, to enlarge. To have yielded to the temptation would have been to defeat his purpose; and, I may add, the purpose of the Book-Room.

The book, substantially, is as it was. Here and there a paragraph has been slightly and reverently touched. More frequently, by the adoption of a more modern and simple form of punctuation, sentences have been shortened. The aim has been to make the story, if possible, still more suitable for children.

My father hoped that those who read his brief life of *The Father of Methodism* would be allured to read John Wesley's *Journals*. With what joy would he have hailed the publication of *Wesley his Own Biographer!* In that richly illustrated volume all

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the most interesting portions of the *Journals* are given in an unusually attractive form.

Of late years several books on the Wesleys and the history of Methodism have appeared. As specially suitable for those who have advanced beyond childhood, I may name the Rev. Dr. Rigg's *The Living Wesley;* the Rev. Richard Green's *John Wesley*,—a third edition of which has recently been published by the Book-Room;—Dr. Lelièvre's *John Wesley: His Life and Work;* the Rev. John Telford's *Lives of John and Charles Wesley;* and, in Welsh, the Rev. John Evans' *Life of Wesley*. All these books should have a place in Sunday-school libraries.

For the facts of his little book my father was mainly indebted, of course, to the *Journals* and to the then existing Lives of Wesley. But it will perhaps add to the interest of the volume if I emphasize a fact to which he alludes in his brief Introduction. His boyhood was spent at the fountain-head of the best traditions of early Bristol Methodism. His maternal grandmother knew Mr. Wesley. An aunt of my mother—Miss Ellison—was one of John Wesley's nieces. My mother remembers her distinctly: a woman with auburn hair and beautiful eyes, in face and figure singularly like John Wesley. She was a remarkably clever woman. Until she quarrelled with him on the Calvinistic controversy, she was one of her uncle's frequent travelling companions and helpers in his work. Living as a boy under the shadow of the first Methodist chapel ever built, in a house furnished in part from John Wesley's rooms over the chapel, and to which ancient Methodists resorted, my father's boyhood was saturated with stories of the Wesleys and their friends.

Another fact may also be noted. My father's first Circuit after his ordination was Wednesbury. There, and in other towns of the Black Country, he often saw relics of the "riots" which he so graphically describes. No wonder that he desired to tell the children of Methodism the stories which had so greatly influenced his own childhood and early manhood.

That this life of *The Father of Methodism* may, by God's blessing, be the means of creating in our Sunday-schools, and in the homes of "the people called Methodists," a desire for the spread of true religion throughout the world, is the earnest prayer of those who now restore it, in a new and brighter form, to the children of Methodism.

LOTHIAN HOUSE,
SOUTHEND-ON-SEA,
May, 1903.

NEHEMIAH CURNOCK.

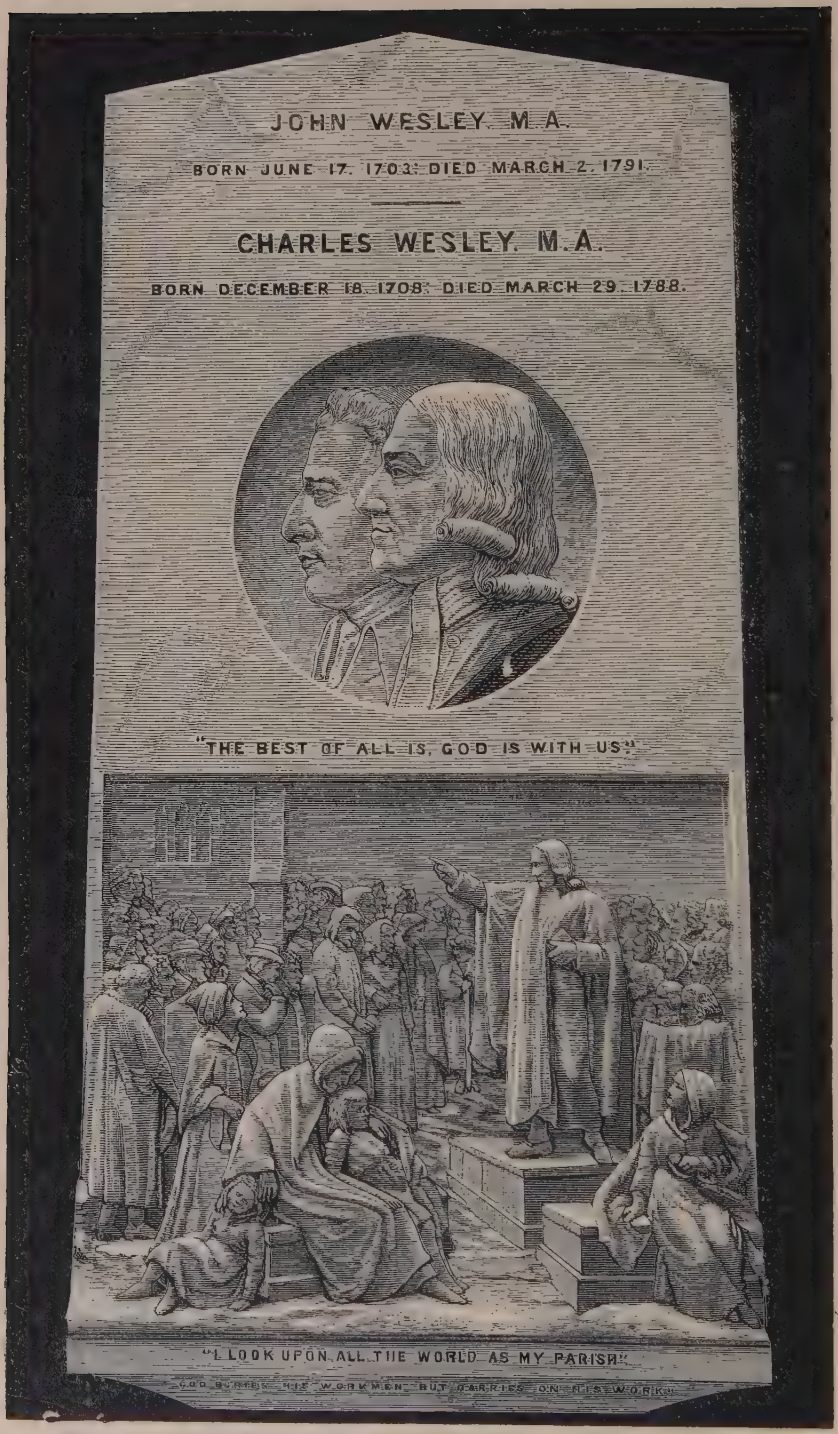
EPWORTH RECTORY.

INTRODUCTION.

MY DEAR CHILDREN, You will find in this book a history of the life of that great and good man to whose labours, under God, your parents, your country, and the world, with thousands of happy saints now in heaven, owe very much of their good and happiness.

We call John Wesley *The Father of Methodism*. That you may know his history, this book is written. It is *your* book. From it you will learn much which at present you do not know about the man whom Almighty God raised up in this country, more than one hundred and fifty years ago, to do so much good; and to whose labours, with those of other good men who were his "helpers," you owe your beautiful chapels, your Sunday-schools, much of the happiness of your homes, and many other blessings which true religion brings.

I well remember when I was a little boy hearing my aged grandmother and other good old people, who for many years had known *The Father of Methodism*, tell their stories about him: how fond he was of good children; how he took them on his knee, or between his knees, and sweetly talked to them about their Saviour; how he taught them to sing some of the hymns now in your hymn-book; and how, before leaving, he gave them a bright new sixpence, a few of which he always had in his waistcoat-pocket for the dear children. And I should tell you that when these children became men and women, and even when they were old people, they never forgot John Wesley, but with pleasure would tell how kindly he treated them when they were little ones. Now, I shall tell you—much in the same way in which they used to tell me—all about his life and labours; and also something about the Methodism of which we call him *The Father*.


JOHN WESLEY. M.A.
BORN JUNE 17. 1703: DIED MARCH 2. 1791.
CHARLES WESLEY. M.A.
BORN DECEMBER 18. 1708: DIED MARCH 29. 1788.
"THE BEST OF ALL IS, GOD IS WITH US."
"I LOOK UPON ALL THE WORLD AS MY PARISH."
GOD BURIES HIS WORKMEN BUT CARRIES ON HIS WORK.

TABLET IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

VIEW OF EPWORTH CHURCH.

THE FATHER OF METHODISM.

CHAPTER I.

THE FAMILY AT EPWORTH.

"Away with our fears! The glad morning appears
When an heir of salvation was born!
From Jehovah I came, For His glory I am,
And to Him I with singing return."

IN Lincolnshire there is a quiet little market town called Epworth, with an old Church. Here, more than one hundred and eighty years ago, lived and preached a good clergyman whose name was Samuel Wesley. His wife, Mrs. Susannah Wesley, was a most excellent woman. She helped her husband very much in his work for the people of Epworth. There they laboured for more than forty years, beloved by all the godly people in the place.

They had a large family, three sons and seven daughters. The names of their sons were Samuel, John, and Charles. John, their second son, who became *The Father of Methodism*, was born at Epworth, on the 17th day of June, 1703. Mrs. Wesley was a very kind mother and fond of all her children. She did not send them out to school, but taught them at home herself. When they were

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five years old, she began to teach them the alphabet, which they learned in a few hours. She then took the Bible and began at the first verse in Genesis; they had to spell the words at first, but they very soon could read without either spelling or stopping. In this way she taught all her children to read, usually spending with them six hours a day.

On Sabbath-days she talked with them about their souls and their need of a Saviour. When their father was from home, she read sermons to them, and invited her neighbours to come in and join with her and her children and servants in the worship of God.

REV. SAMUEL WESLEY.

It was a great blessing to them to have such a good mother; and they all loved, honoured and obeyed her.

The Father of Methodism always said that he owed very much to his dear mother's teaching and care; and it was her great happiness to live to see him and his brother Charles very holy and useful men.

Before we leave Epworth, I must tell you how God in His goodness once saved one of the dear children from being burned to death in the fire which destroyed the Parsonage-house.

One cold winter's night in February, 1709, the Parsonage-house took fire. Some have thought that it was set on fire by wicked people in the town, who did not like Mr. Wesley. It was between eleven and twelve o'clock in the night, when all the family were fast asleep. One of the children (Hetty) was awoke by fire falling on her bed and burning her feet. She ran into her mother's room to give the alarm. Just then her father was awoke by men in the street crying "Fire!" He got up, little thinking that his own house was on fire. But on opening the door, he found that the house was full of smoke, and that the roof, which was of thatch, was already burnt through. There were eight of the children then in the house. Mrs. Wesley was

very ill at the time, but she escaped from the burning house with her two eldest girls, having to wade through the flames by which her hands and face were much scorched. The servant maid went into the room where the little children were sleeping, caught up the two youngest, and told the others to follow her. This they all did except one little boy, who was about six years old; and he says,—for he remembered it all his life: "Seeing the room was very light, I called to the maid to take me up; and not coming to me, I put my head out of the curtains, and saw sparks of fire on the top of the room. I got up, and ran to the door, but could get no further, for all the floor beyond was in a blaze; then I climbed upon a chest and stood before the window."

MRS. SUSANNAH WESLEY.

During this time the father took all the other children out through the windows; but as he was carrying them into the garden, he heard the child who was left in the house crying for help. He went back, and tried several times to get to him, but he could not, for the stairs were so burned that they would not bear his weight. Finding no hope of saving him, he gave him up for lost, and kneeling down in the garden commended his soul to God. But just at this time a man in the yard saw the dear little fellow in his night clothes at the window. He was running to get a ladder, when another man, who saw that the house was about to fall, cried out: "There is no time for that. Here! I will fix myself against the wall, and you lift up a light man, and set him on my shoulders."

This they quickly did, and only just in time, for the house fell a moment or two after they had taken him from the window. They brought the dear boy to his father and mother, when the good father cried out: "Come, neighbours, let us kneel down! let us give thanks to God! He has given me all my eight children: let the house go; I am *rich* enough!"

This little boy was JOHN WESLEY, and he never forgot his wonderful escape from the fire. When he became a man and his likeness was taken, he had a house in flames drawn under the portrait, with these words: "Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?"

JOHN WESLEY RESCUED FROM THE FIRE.

What a great mercy that God saved his life! And how thankful we should be to the kind man who put himself against the wall, risking his life to save the life of a little child.

Ever after this, his dear mother says, she "thought more about him than of her other children;" believing that God had some great work for him to do. She was very careful in teaching him to avoid sin; to love and fear God; and as Hannah of old offered Samuel, so she offered her little boy to God in earnest prayer.

He lived at home with his parents till he was between eleven and twelve years old, when he was sent to the Charterhouse School, in London. Here he remained between four and five years. He was a

good, hard-working boy, never spending his time in idleness, but trying to learn *all* he could, as *well* as he could, and as *fast* as he could. His brother Samuel, who was then in London, says of him in one of

CHARTERHOUSE SCHOOL IN THE DAYS OF WESLEY.

his letters to his father: "My brother Jack is with me; a brave boy, learning Hebrew as fast as he can." He was a great favourite with the Head Master, and made such improvement in his learning, that by the time he was little more than sixteen years old he was thought fit to go to the Oxford University.

LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD.

CHAPTER II.

THE STUDENT AT OXFORD, AND THE RISE OF METHODISM.

"With thanks I rejoice In Thy fatherly choice
Of my state and condition below;
If of parents I came Who honoured Thy Name,
'Twas Thy wisdom appointed it so."

IN England there are two large Universities, or seats of learning, one at Oxford, the other at Cambridge. In each of these Universities there are several Colleges and many learned men. It is to these Colleges that young men are sent to be educated for the Ministry and other learned professions. But much of the success of the students depends on their own efforts. They do not gain honours without hard work, any more than you gain rewards and prizes at school without attention and good conduct.

John Wesley was admitted a student into Christ Church College, Oxford, before he was seventeen years old. That you may know how hard he worked as a student, and how well he got on, I will tell you what honours he gained before he was twenty-five years old. In the year 1720, he entered the college, and soon took his degree of Bachelor of Arts. He was ordained a Deacon in 1725; elected Fellow of Lincoln College in 1726; made Master of Arts in 1727, and ordained Priest in 1728. Now, although you may not understand all about these honours, yet you will see from this that John Wesley must have been a very hard-working young man, and

must have conducted himself well, or he would not have gained so many honours when he was so young.

During the time he was at Oxford he wrote letters to his parents on every step he took, and often to his mother on the state of his mind. His success greatly pleased his parents, for his mother in one of her letters to him says: "I think myself obliged to return thanks to Almighty God for giving you such good success at Lincoln."

And here I should tell you that he lived by rule. He rose early

OXFORD, FROM HEADINGTON HILL.

in the morning, and never sat up late at night. He was very temperate in eating and drinking; he never spent his money in fine clothes or foolish things, as other young men did; he was kind and obliging in his behaviour to all, and was thought well of by those in Oxford who knew him.

It was at Oxford, in the year 1729, that Methodism first began; and we think that Mr. John Wesley ought to be called *The Father* of Oxford Methodism, as he was afterwards of Methodism everywhere. His mother had taught him when he was a child to fear and love God, and had always told him, that if he would be useful and happy he

must be holy; and while at Oxford he tried to be so. He read good books, such as *The Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis; and Bishop Taylor's *Rules of Holy Living and Dying;* and especially his Bible. About this time he with his brother Charles, who also was an Oxford student, and two other young gentlemen, Mr. Morgan and Mr. Kirkham, agreed to spend together a few evenings every week in reading the Greek Testament, and in trying to get good to their souls. Some time after they had begun to meet, Mr. Ingham, Mr. Broughton, Mr. Clayton, Mr. Hervey, and then Mr. George Whitefield joined them. They all agreed to live by the rules of God's Holy Word, and to take the Lord's Supper once every week.

JOHN WESLEY AS A STUDENT.

It was soon seen in Oxford that they were better than most of the other young men, some of whom called them "A Godly Club;" and then, as a nickname, *Methodists*, because they lived by rule or method. It was here in Oxford, one hundred and sixty years ago, that this name METHODIST was first given to Mr. John Wesley and the few young gentlemen who joined with him to serve God. From this time we must think of him as the *Father* of Methodism, for all the members of the Holy Club looked to Mr. Wesley as their father; and in a letter which his father sent to him and his brother Charles, about this time, he says: "I hear my son John has the honour to be called 'The Father of the Holy Club.' If it be so, I am sure I must be the grandfather of it; and I need not say that I had rather any of my sons should be so honoured than have the title of his Holiness the Pope."

And now, as Methodists, they not only tried to *be* good, but to *do* good. They visited the prisoners in the jail, and preached the Gospel to them; they went into the houses of the poor and the sick, and gave them money and medicine; they gathered the ignorant children of the town into a school, taught them to read, and gave them clothes. To do all this they often had to deny themselves, but this they gladly did that they might do good to the bodies and souls of the poor people and

THE HOLY CLUB.

their children. Their labours were much blessed in Oxford, and many had to thank God for the rise of Methodism there. Although some made sport of them, and talked of "blowing up the Godly Club," these young men returned good for evil, and tried only to serve and please God, by getting good, and doing good. They asked themselves, their friends and their enemies, these questions: "Ought we not to do good to all men? Can we be happy at all hereafter unless we have, according to our power, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick and the prisoner, and tried to save souls from death?"

BOCARDO PRISON, OXFORD.

About three years after they had formed their little society, one of its members, Mr. Morgan, was taken away from them by death. He was the first who joined with John and Charles Wesley. A most holy, earnest, useful young man, he died very happy in God. We must think of Mr. Morgan as the first man bearing the new name of 'Methodist" who entered into that heaven of glory, where thousands bearing the same name have since entered, to join with him and a great multitude in singing the song of the Lamb Who redeemed them and washed them in His own most precious blood, and hath made them kings and priests, to reign with Him for ever and ever.

LANDING AT SAVANNAH.

CHAPTER III.

THE MISSIONARY TO THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS.

"I sing of Thy grace, From my earliest days
Ever near to allure and defend;
Hitherto Thou hast been My Preserver from sin,
And I trust Thou wilt save to the end."

MR. WESLEY now became more anxious every day to do good. He might have had his father's church at Epworth, for in the spring of the year 1735 his father died; but he had a large heart and he wanted a larger parish than Epworth. About this time missionaries were wanted for Georgia, in North America, to preach the Gospel in the New Colony, and also to the Indians. Mr. Wesley was asked to go. After much thought and prayer, and after consulting his mother, he with his brother Charles and two others agreed to go; because, as they said, "they wished to save their own souls and do good."

In the month of October of the same year, they set sail for America, with Mr. Ingham and Mr. Delamotte. There were also in the ship with them twenty-six Germans, members of the Moravian Church, and very good people. The Moravians were made a great blessing to Mr. Wesley on the long and stormy voyage.

You will perhaps like to know something about this voyage; and you shall, for Mr. Wesley has left us an account of it. He says:

"Our common way of living was this. From four in the morning

till five we were engaged in private prayer. From five to seven we read the Bible together. At seven we breakfasted. At eight were the public prayers. From nine to eleven I usually learned German, and Mr. Delamotte Greek; my brother wrote sermons, and Mr. Ingham taught the children. At twelve we met together to give an account to each other of what we had done since our last meeting, and what we meant to do before our next. About one we dined. The time from dinner to four we spent in reading to the people on board. At four were evening prayers, when the lesson was explained, or the children

GERMANS ON BOARD SHIP DURING A STORM.

catechised and instructed. From five to six we again used private prayer. From six to seven I read in my cabin to two or three of the passengers. At seven I joined with the Germans in their public service, while Mr. Ingham was reading between the decks to as many as would hear him. At eight we met again to instruct one another. Between nine and ten we went to bed, where neither the roaring of the sea nor the motion of the ship could take away the refreshing sleep which God gave us." It was much in this way that Mr. Wesley, for more than fifty years after this, filled up every hour of his time, always having something to do, and a time fixed for doing it.

In the early part of the voyage they had three great storms. In one of these Mr. Wesley says: "The waves of the sea were mighty, and raged horribly; they rose up to heaven above, and went down to hell beneath." But God in His great mercy heard their prayer, and saved them and the ship.

In one of these storms, when the sea broke over the ship splitting the mainsail, and the water pouring in between the decks threatened to swallow them up, the good Germans were all very calm, singing one of their psalms. Mr. Wesley afterwards asked one of them:

"Were you not afraid?"

"I thank God, no," he said.

"But were not your women and children afraid?"

"No," he mildly said, "our women and children are not afraid to die."

But the English were all afraid and screamed very much. And Mr. Wesley was afraid. At that time he was not saved from the fear of death, for he says: "I was then unwilling to die." But in after years he had no fear of death: he could say with St. Paul: "To die is gain."

On February the 6th, 1736, they landed safe in America. They all knelt down on a piece of rising ground and heartily thanked God for His great goodness in bringing them safely to the end of their long and dangerous voyage.

As Mr. Wesley could not go among the Indians, he began his ministry in Savannah, on Sunday, March the 7th. He remained nearly two years in America, where he was made the means of doing much good. He felt much for the poor Indians, and would most gladly have spent his life as a missionary amongst them, but God saw that it was better to send him back again to his own country. He often talked with the Indians, and you will be pleased to read one of his conversations with the old chief Chicali:

"I asked him what he thought he was made for.

"He said: 'He that is above knows what He made us for. We know nothing, we are in the dark. But white men know much; and yet white men build great houses, as if they were to live for ever. But white men cannot live for ever; in a little time white men will be dust as well as I.'

"I then told him that if red men would learn the good Book they might know as much as white men; but that neither we nor they can know that Book unless we are taught by Him that is above; and He will never teach us, unless we avoid what we know is not good.

"The Indian said: 'I believe that He will not teach us while our hearts are not white, and our men do what they know is not good. They kill their own children; and our women do what they know is not good, they kill the children; and He Who is above, because of this, will not send us the good Book.'"

MR. WESLEY TALKING TO A YOUNG NEGRESS.

At another time, Mr. Wesley asked a poor negro girl who came to church, Whether she knew that she had a soul? She said she did not; she had never heard that before, and thought that when a man died he died altogether, like the horse.

He was very much pained at the ignorance and wickedness of these poor creatures; but he had soon to leave them, for some of the people in the colony treated him very badly, because he had been strict as a minister, and would not allow people whose conduct was not good to come to the Lord's Supper, until they had repented of their sins and promised to do better. For this they persecuted him, and tried to ruin him; and he saw that it would be best for him to leave them and return to England. On December the 22nd, 1737, he took his leave of America, believing it to be his duty to do so.

SOUTH LEIGH CHURCH, WHERE MR. WESLEY PREACHED HIS FIRST SERMON

CHAPTER IV.

THE RETURN TO ENGLAND, AND THE STATE OF RELIGION IN THE NATION AT THE TIME.

"O the infinite cares, And temptations, and snares,
Thy hand hath conducted me through!
O the blessings bestowed By a bountiful God,
And the mercies eternally new!"

MR. WESLEY arrived in England on the 1st day of February, 1738, having been away in all two years and nearly four months, during which time he had seen much, suffered much, and learned very much that was made of great use to him all his life after. He was always glad that he had gone to America; for by going he had met with the good Moravians of whom you read in the last chapter, and from them he gained much knowledge about the things of God.

As soon as he reached England, we find him trying to do good. He landed at Deal. In the inn where he first lodged, he read prayers and explained God's Holy Word to as many of the people of the house as would hear him. From thence he made the best of his way to London, where, on the 7th day of February, "a day," he says in his *Journal*, "much to be remembered," he met with good Peter Böhler: a minister of the Moravian Church, who, with some others from Germany, had just come to London. From this good man he learned what he had long wanted more fully to understand: that sinners were saved by faith alone in the blood of Christ; that all who believe in Jesus Christ as crucified for them have all their sins forgiven for

Christ's sake, are received into the favour of God, and become the children of God; and that they may know this by having the Holy Spirit of God, bearing witness with their spirits that they are now His children. He also learned from him that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, could cleanse us from all sin, making our hearts holy by faith in Him, and giving us power to love the Lord our God with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind, and with all the strength; and that when we do this we are real Christians.

Now, I have been careful to tell you this, because these were the

MR. WESLEY PREACHING AT AN INN.

great doctrines of the Bible which the Father of Methodism himself fully believed and earnestly preached for more than fifty years. These are the doctrines which all the Wesleyan ministers now believe and preach in all parts of the world. This was called a new faith. Some who heard it thought Mr. Wesley and the other ministers who preached it were in great error. But many soon believed it, and were saved; for when Peter Böhler left London, which he did in the month of May, Mr. Wesley says: "O what a work hath God begun since his coming into England; such an one as shall never come to an end till heaven and earth pass away!"

Mr. Wesley was soon enabled to believe with all his heart in the precious blood of Christ as shed for him. He had no sooner done so, than he says: "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ *alone* for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved me from the law of sin and death." He began to pray with all his might for all those who had injured or persecuted him, and told to all in the place

PETER BÖHLER.

what he then felt in his heart. This took place on Wednesday evening, May the 24th, in a room in Aldersgate-street, London. From this evening his soul was filled with love to God, and pity for poor sinners, whom he saw perishing everywhere; for at this time religion was in a very low state in this nation. Most of the people were very ignorant and wicked; there was much infidelity; and rich and poor alike hated or neglected all that was good.

In the churches, there were very few clergymen who cared much

about the souls of the people; and in many of the chapels the divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was denied.

The chapels were very few; the churches were badly attended.

There were no Sabbath-schools; and scarcely any of the poor, either men, women, or children, could read. There was no Bible Society, no Tract Society. Not one of the great and good Societies we now have in England had then been formed, except the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. So that the people might with truth have said: "No man careth for our souls."

In many of the towns, both large and small, there was the bull-stake, the cock-pit, and plenty of places where the people could fight, and dance, and get drunk.

The Sabbath-day was perhaps the very worst day of the seven; for the people, especially the poor, caring nothing about either God or their souls, spent it in all kinds of sports and wickedness, while their children ran about dirty and ragged; "wild as the untaught Indian's brood."

There are, we are very sorry to know, even now a great number of ignorant and wicked people and children in our country; but how many must there have been then, when tens of thousands did not know a single letter of the alphabet, and never, perhaps, entered a place of worship. Mr. Watson, in his life of Mr. Wesley, says, that "till very lately in some of the villages in this country the only prayer the poor children were taught by their parents was an old Popish one, which begins with:

'Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
Bless the bed that I lie on.
Four corners to my bed,
Four angels round my head, etc.'"

From this chapter you will learn something of the very low state of religion in this country, and of the ignorance and wickedness of the people, when the Father of Methodism began his work of mercy in the year 1738.

PREACHING AT PENSFORD.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIELD PREACHER, AND THE BEGINNING OF THE METHODIST SOCIETIES.

"O the goodness of God, Employing a clod
His tribute of glory to raise!
His standard to bear, And with triumph declare
His unspeakable riches of grace."

NOW we shall soon see the Father of Methodism beginning his great work in this country. But I should tell you that after his return from America, he went as soon as he could to see his mother, and then his brother Charles who was then lying very ill at Oxford.

He preached in several churches, and great crowds came to hear him. But having been so much pleased with the Moravians, he made up his mind to pay a visit to Germany and see these good people. For this purpose he went to Herrnhuth, one of their settlements, and stayed with them for a fortnight. He was very much pleased with what he saw and heard there, especially with the sermons of Christian David, a very holy man. "I would gladly," says Mr. Wesley, "have spent my life here; but my Master calling me to labour in another

part of His vineyard, I was forced to take my leave of this happy place. O when shall this Christianity cover the earth 'as the waters cover the sea'!" He says again, that he "was much blessed and comforted by his visit to these lovely people." He returned to England more fully determined to spend his life in preaching the Gospel of the grace of God.

He arrived in London in September, 1738, and began with all his soul to preach the Gospel in all the churches that were open to him.

HERRNHUTH.

Great crowds came to hear him. But very soon one church after another was closed against him, until almost all the London churches were refused to him and his brother Charles. But he could not be stopped; for almost every evening of the week he expounded the Scriptures in rooms about London, to as many people as they would hold.

In the spring of the year 1739, he visited Bristol, and expounded the Scriptures in a room in Nicholas Street.

On the next day, Monday, April the 2nd, he preached for the first

time in the open air, to about three thousand persons. This took place at four o'clock in the afternoon, on a piece of rising ground then near the city, but now called Caroline Row, at the top of King's Square His text was: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

On the Wednesday he went to Baptist-Mills, about half-a-mile

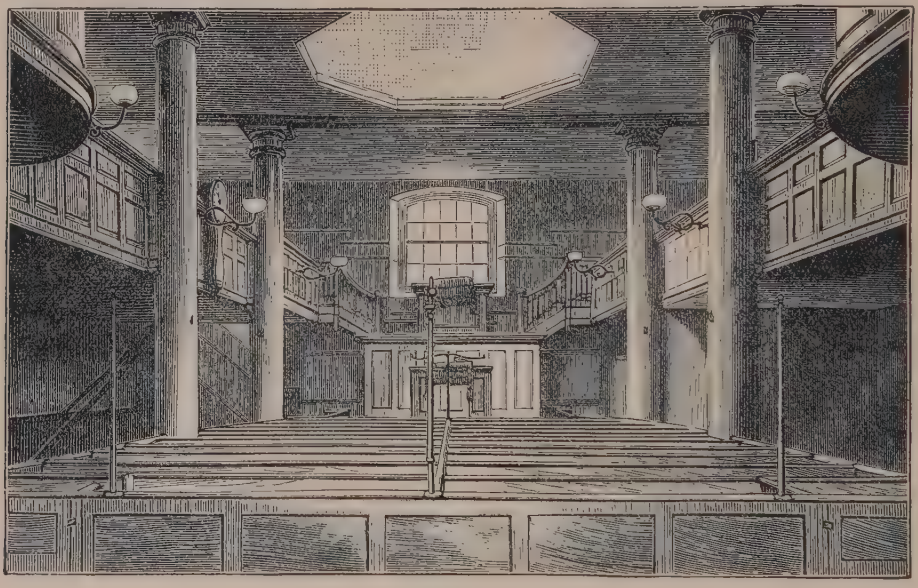
ROOM OVER MR. WESLEY'S FIRST PREACHING HOUSE.

from the city, and preached to above fifteen hundred people, from the words: "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely."

And on the following Sunday, at seven o'clock in the morning, he preached on the Bowling Green, to about a thousand persons; afterwards to about fifteen hundred, on the top of Hannam Mount, in Kingswood; and again in the afternoon at Rose Green, on the other side of Kingswood, to about five thousand persons; these were chiefly colliers.

That you may know how very hard Mr. Wesley worked in trying to do good at this time, I will give you his own account, from his *Journal*, of a week's work.

"Every morning I read prayers, and preached at Newgate to the prisoners." This was the old city jail, but long since taken down. "Every evening I expounded a portion of Scripture at one or more of the society-rooms. On Monday, in the afternoon, I preached near Bristol; on Tuesday at Bath and Two-Mile-Hill, by turns; on Wednesday at Baptist-Mills; every other Thursday near Pensford; every other Friday in another part of Kingswood; on Saturday in the afternoon and Sunday morning in the Bowling Green (which is near the middle of the city); on Sunday, at eleven, near Hannam Mount, at



THE PREACHING ROOM, BRISTOL.

two at Clifton, and at five at Rose Green." "And hitherto," he says, "as my day, so my strength has been."

Very much good was done in all the places where he preached. In the city of Bristol many careless sinners were brought to God. The prisoners in Newgate were so much affected by what they heard, that all Newgate frequently rang with their cries for mercy. At Kingswood hundreds of ignorant colliers were converted and made happy in God. In many places, while he was preaching, men, women, and children dropped down on the ground, crying out: "What must we do to be saved?" Among these was a young man called Thomas Maxfield, who was hearing Mr. Wesley in a room in Nicholas Street, when "he sunk

down as one dead ; but he soon began to roar out, and to beat himself against the ground, so that six men could scarcely hold him." However, he was soon able to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart, and was made very happy.

I have named this young man because he was the first person employed by Mr. Wesley as a Methodist preacher.

After staying some time in Bristol and the neighbourhood, Mr. Wesley returned to London, when he went with Mr. Whitefield to Blackheath, and preached to about twelve or fourteen thousand people. On the following Sunday morning, at seven o'clock, he preached in Moorfields, to about six or seven thousand people ; and again at five in the afternoon, on Kennington Common, to about fifteen thousand people.

These were his first labours out of doors in London.

About this time the Methodist Societies were formed. You shall have Mr. Wesley's own account of their beginning. He says : "The first rise of Methodism was in November, 1729, when four of us met together at Oxford. The second was at Savannah, in North America, in April, 1736, when twenty or thirty persons met at my house. The third was at London, on this day, (May the 1st, 1738,) when forty or fifty of us agreed to meet together every Wednesday evening." The fourth was in Bristol, in the summer of 1739. Now were formed what Mr. Wesley called the "United Societies," first in London, either in November or December, 1739, and very soon afterwards in many other places. All who joined them professed a desire to save their souls, and serve and please God.

Now as these societies were formed, they needed places in which to meet, where they could worship God, and hear His Holy Word preached.

This led to the building of Methodist chapels.

In Bristol, on Saturday, May the 12th, 1739, the first stone of the first Methodist chapel was laid by Mr. Wesley, he says : "With the voice of praise and thanksgiving." This was on "a piece of ground near to St. James's Churchyard, in the Horse-fair." This chapel was called for many years : "The New Room ;" and after that : "The Old Room, Bristol." It was to pay off the debt on this chapel that the members of the society first began to pay a penny a week.

Mr. Wesley asked : "How shall we pay the debt ?"

Captain Foy stood up and said : "Let every one in the society give a penny a week, and it will easily be done."

But many of them said: "We have not a penny to give."

"True," said the Captain, "then put ten or twelve of them to me, let each of these give what they can weekly, and I will supply what is wanting."

Many others made the same offer. Then Mr. Wesley divided them into Classes of about twelve persons to each Class, and put one over each called the "Leader," to collect the money, and meet them once a week.

FIRST METHODIST "CLASS-MEETING" CALLED BY THAT NAME.

In November of this year, Mr. Wesley opened his first chapel in London.

This was called "The Foundery," because it had been used as a foundry for casting brass cannon for the Government; but by the kindness of some gentlemen, Mr. Wesley fitted it up as a chapel, and used it as such for many years. It was a large brick building, near where Finsbury Square now stands. Behind it was Mr. Wesley's house, where he lived when in London, and where his dear mother died. He could go from his house by a passage into the chapel. On

one side of it there was a schoolroom for the children, and on the other were two rooms, in one of which there was an electrifying machine for the use of poor sick people, and in the other books were kept for sale. At the top of the Foundery was a small bell which was rung every morning before preaching at five o'clock, and before all the other

THE FOUNDERY.

services. There were then no lamps in that part of London, and during the dark winter mornings and evenings the good people were seen with their lanterns making their way to this house of prayer; these happy souls have long since gone to that better world where "they need no candle, neither light of the sun."

JOHN NELSON AND MR. WESLEY GATHERING BLACKBERRIES FOR FOOD.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SPREAD OF METHODISM, AND THE PERSECUTIONS OF ITS FIRST PREACHERS.

"O the fathomless love, That has deigned to approve,
And prosper the work of my hands!
With my pastoral crook, I went over the brook,
And, behold, I am spread into bands!"

METHODISM now began to spread in many parts of the country.

While Mr. Wesley was travelling and preaching with all his might, his brother Charles with Mr. Whitefield and a few other good clergymen were preaching the "new faith," as it was then called, and many believed and were saved; so that in many of the towns, both large and small, societies were formed, all of which Mr. Wesley visited as soon as he could.

In the year 1742 he paid his first visit to the North of England, and began his labours in Yorkshire. Here many people had already been led to seek salvation by the labours of good John Nelson, the stonemason. John Nelson had himself been brought to God while working in London, by attending the preaching of Mr. Wesley at the Foundery chapel. As soon as he was made happy in his own soul he returned home to Birstal, in Yorkshire, and began preaching to his townsmen and neighbours. By his pressing wish, Mr. Wesley came

into Yorkshire and preached on Birstal Hill, to a very large number of people, and then in other places.

After encouraging John Nelson to go on in his blessed work, Mr. Wesley went to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and began preaching there among the colliers, as he had done at Kingswood. In walking through the town he was very much pained by what he saw and heard. He says: "So much drunkenness, cursing and swearing, even from the mouths of little children, do I never remember to have seen or heard before, in so short a time." Here he preached to many hundreds, and very much good was done. A large society was formed, and very soon he built a chapel, which was called "The Orphan House."

MR. JOHN NELSON.

On his way back from the North of England, he visited, among many other places, Epworth, where he was born, and where his dear father had lived and laboured for above forty years. As the clergyman would not let him preach in the church, he stood upon his father's tombstone and preached to a very large congregation. This was on the Sunday, and on the following Wednesday, he rode over to a neighbouring town to see a justice of the peace before whom he was told a wagon-load of poor Methodists had been carried. When the justice asked what they had done, no one had anything to say.

At last one said: "Why they pretend to be better than other people, and besides they pray from morning till night."

"But," said the justice, "have they done nothing else?"

"Yes, Sir," said an old man, "an't please your worship they have *convarted* my wife: till she went among them she had such a tongue; and now she is as quiet as a lamb."

ORPHAN HOUSE, NEWCASTLE.

"Carry them back! carry them back!" cried the justice, "and let them convert all the scolds in the town."

On the following Sunday, he preached for the last time in Epworth, and was much pleased by seeing some of the fruits of his father's labours now beginning to appear after so many years.

From here he went to Bristol, but was soon called to London to attend the death-bed of his mother, who died July 23rd, 1742, in the blessed hope of heaven. She said to her sons and daughters while they stood around her bed: "Children, as soon as I am released, sing a psalm of praise to God." She is buried in the Bunhill Fields burying ground, and her son Charles, who was the poet of Methodism, wrote some very beautiful verses which are now on her tombstone. The brothers always loved and honoured their dear mother, and they felt her loss greatly.

In the year 1743, besides preaching much in London and Bristol, Mr. Wesley visited and preached at many other places. But while at Bristol he heard that many of the Methodists in Staffordshire had been very badly used. At Wednesbury, Darlaston, and West

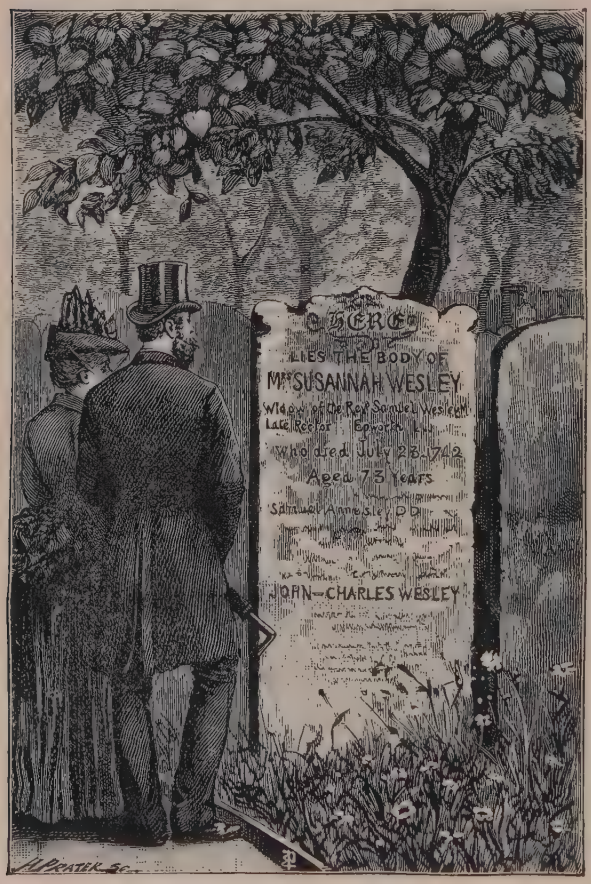
Bromwich, men broke into their houses, spoiled or carried away their goods, and beat the women and children most cruelly, pelting them with stones and mud. Some of the great grandchildren of these persecuted Methodists now show a cupboard, or a clock, or an

MR. WESLEY PREACHING ON HIS FATHER'S TOMBSTONE.

old chest of drawers that was then broken by the mobs. Mr. Wesley made all the haste he could to go and comfort and advise them

Reaching Wednesbury, he preached at noon from the horse block in what was then called the bull-ring. In the afternoon, while he was sitting in Francis Ward's, writing, the mob beset the house. He prayed to God to send them away, and He answered his prayers, for in half an hour not a man was left. He then told the people who were

with him in the house, that it was time for him to go; but they all pressed him to stay, and that he might not offend them he sat down. Before five o'clock the mob came again in greater numbers than ever, and the cry of one and all was: "Bring out the minister!" "We will have the minister!" Mr. Wesley told one of them to go out and take the leader of the mob by the hand and bring him into the house, which he did; and after he had spoken a few words to him, the lion became quiet as a lamb. He then wished him to go and bring in two or three of his most angry companions. When they came they were fit to eat the ground with rage, but in a few minutes they became as calm as their leader.



THE GRAVE OF MRS. S. WESLEY.

Mr. Wesley then told them to make way, that he might go out among the people. As soon as he was in the midst of them he called for a chair, and standing upon it said:

"What do any of you want with me?"

Some said: "We want you to go to the justice."

He said: "I will go with all my heart."

He then spoke a few kind words to them, which God blessed, so that they all cried out with might and main: "The gentleman is an honest gentleman; we will spill our blood for him!"

He then asked them: "Shall we go to-night or to-morrow morning?"

Most of them cried out : "To-night, to-night!"

So he walked on before two or three hundred of them, the rest going home. Before they had got a mile out of the town, the night became dark with heavy rain. However, they got on to Bentley Hall, about two miles from Wednesbury. One or two ran before to tell Mr. Lane, the justice, that they had brought Mr. Wesley before his worship.

Mr. Lane said : "What have I to do with Mr. Wesley? Carry him back again."

THE RIOT AT WEDNESBURY.

By this time the main body of the mob came up, and began knocking at the door, when the servant came and said that Mr. Lane was in bed. Then his son came and asked :

"What is the matter?"

One of the mob said : "Why, an't please you, they sing psalms all day and make folks rise at five in the morning ; and what would your worship advise us to do?"

"Why, to go home and be quiet."

Here they were all at a standstill, and knew not what to do, when one of them said : "We will go to Justice Persehouse, at Walsall." All

agreed to this, and so they hastened on to Walsall, and got there about seven o'clock. But Justice Persehouse sent to say that he was in bed. Now they were fast again. At last they all thought it best to go home; and about fifty of them offered to take Mr. Wesley back to Wednesbury. Before they had gone many yards, the mob from Walsall came running down upon them, knocking them down, till most of them ran away, and left Mr. Wesley in their hands. He tried to speak, but they roared and made such a noise that he could not be heard. Dragging him along, they came to the town of Darlaston, where, seeing the door of a large house open, he tried to go in, but a man caught him by his hair, and pulled him back again into the middle of the mob. Then they carried him through the main street, from one end of the town to the other. "All this time," he says, he "felt neither pain nor weariness." At the west end of the town, seeing a door half open, he tried to go in, but a gentleman in the shop would not let him do so, saying if he did, the mob would pull the house down. However he stood at the door, and asked them if they would hear him speak. Many cried out: "No, no!" "Knock his brains out!" "Down with him!" "Kill him at once!" Others said: "Nay; but we will hear him first." He then began to ask them what harm he had done them. "Which of you have I wronged in word or deed?" and kept on "speaking for above a quarter of an hour," till his voice failed him.

Then the mob began to roar again—many crying out: "Bring him away! bring him away!" In the meantime his voice and strength came back, and he cried aloud to God in prayer, when the man who had just before headed the mob, turned to him and said: "Sir, I will spend my life for you; follow me, and not one soul here shall touch a hair of your head." Two or three more of them said the same, and got close to him, and the gentleman in the shop cried out, "For shame! for shame! let him go." An honest butcher then came up, and said it was a shame to use him so, at the same time driving back four or five of the mob who were running at him. The mob soon stood back, while three or four men took him between them, and carried him away from them. When they reached the bridge, the mob came again, but they got clear of them by going on one side, over the mill dam and through the meadows; and at a little before ten o'clock at night they brought him to Wednesbury, where he found a number of the people praying for him, and joined them in praising God for his wonderful deliverance.

"In all this," he says, "I only lost one flap of my waistcoat, and a little skin from one of my hands. . . . From the beginning to the end I found the same presence of mind, as if I had been sitting in my own study." He had no fear, for God took care of him. He never fell nor made any stumble; had he fallen he might not have been able to get up again. A stout man tried to strike him over the head many times with a large oak stick, but was never able to touch him. Another man came up to strike him, but just when he was going to do so, he dropped his hand, and only stroked him on his head, saying: "What soft hair he has." The very men who at the first were the worst, at last became his friends. A woman who had headed the mob at Darlaston came to him and said none should touch him, whereupon she was knocked down on the ground, and would have been killed, had not a man called out to them, "Hold, Tom, it is honest Murchin!" so they stopped beating her, and she got up and went away. How wicked these people must have been to have treated him so; but how merciful God was in sparing his life and delivering him out of their hands.

The next morning, when he rode out of Wednesbury on horseback, everybody appeared kind to him. He went on from there to Nottingham, where he met his brother Charles, who says: "My brother came delivered out of the mouths of the lions! His clothes were torn to tatters; he looked like a soldier of Christ. The mob of Wednesbury, Darlaston, and Walsall carried him about for several hours with a full intent to murder him; but his work was not done, or he had now been with 'the souls under the altar.'"

Soon after the time that Mr. Wesley had suffered so much from the mobs in Staffordshire, John Nelson in Yorkshire, and Thomas Beard in Newcastle, were seized and sent for soldiers, for no other crime than preaching the Gospel. Thomas Beard was taken ill and lodged in the Newcastle Hospital, praising God without ceasing. His fever was very bad, and they bled him in the arm. The wound festered and mortified, and the arm was cut off. Two or three days after God signed his discharge, and took him to his eternal home. Thomas Beard was the first Methodist preacher that died, and we may look upon him as a martyr for Christ. These are only a few of the persecutions which Mr. Wesley and the first preachers met with.

LAND'S END.

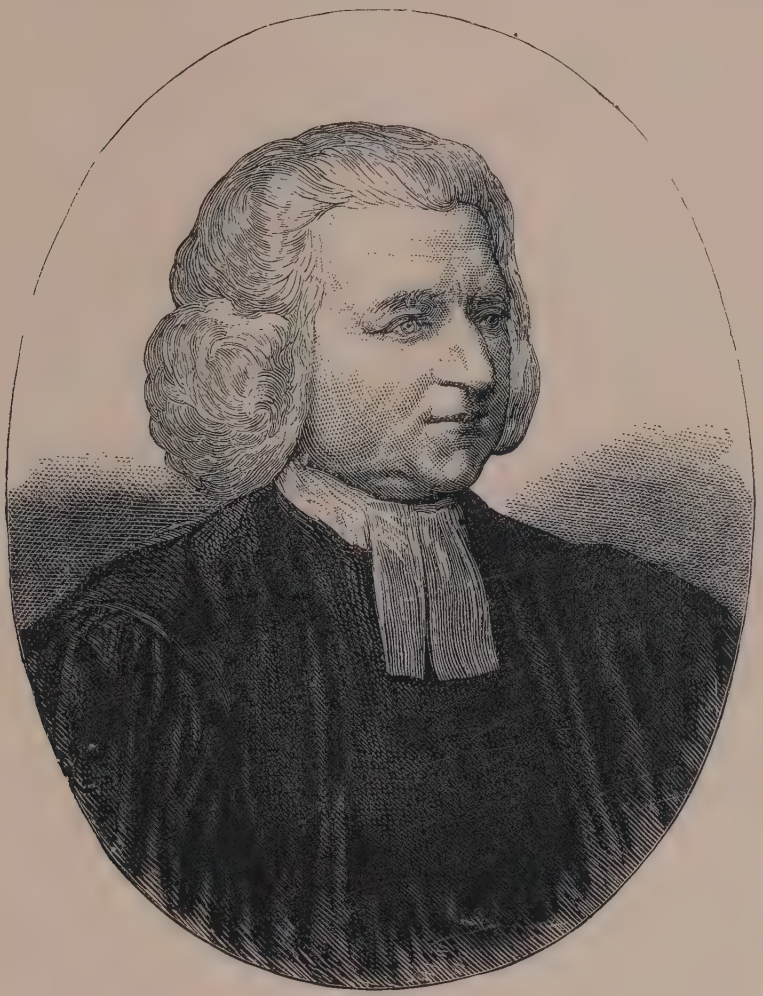
CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST CONFERENCE, AND THE LABOURS AND SUCCESSES OF THE FATHER OF METHODISM AND HIS PREACHERS.

"Who, I ask in amaze, Hath begotten me these?
And enquire from what quarter they came?
My full heart it replies, They are born from the skies,
And gives glory to God and the Lamb."

IN the spring of the year 1744, Mr. Wesley paid his first visit to Cornwall, where he spent three weeks preaching in most of the towns. His brother Charles had been there before him, and much good was done by their labours. Although they suffered much persecution, Methodism took fast hold in the western parts of Cornwall, and has ever since been very prosperous. Mr. Wesley often visited Cornwall after this; nor did the Cornish people ever forget him. When he paid them his last visit, forty years after, Mr. Watson says: "The man who had slept on the ground for want of a lodging, and

picked blackberries to satisfy his hunger, and narrowly escaped with his life from the mob at Falmouth, now, when passing through the



REV. CHARLES WESLEY.

towns and villages, the windows were crowded with people all wishful to get a sight of him, and to pour their blessings on his aged head."

On Monday, June the 25th, 1744, the first Methodist Conference met at the Foundery chapel, in London. There were present at it six clergymen and a few lay preachers (as they were then called). The

names of the clergymen were John and Charles Wesley, John Hodges, Henry Piers, Samuel Taylor, and John Meriton; and of the lay preachers, Thomas Richards, Thomas Maxfield, John Bennet, and John Downes.

After they had spent some time in prayer, they began by asking these three questions:

I. "What to teach?"
II. "How to teach?"
III. "What to do?"

This was the beginning of the Wesleyan Conference. Mr. Wesley lived to attend forty-seven Conferences, at all of which he acted as "President;" for all the preachers looked upon him as their "Father" in the Gospel, and honoured him as such; and now, whenever they speak of him in Conference, they call him "our venerable father." This is one reason why I have given your book the title *The Father of Methodism.*

In the August of this year, Mr. Wesley preached for the last time before the University at Oxford. His brother Charles says: "I never saw a more attentive congregation, and he has delivered his soul." Here they would not allow him to preach again, because he had become a Methodist; but he was happy to know, that although they had shut their doors against him, God had opened many doors in all parts of England and Wales, where he could preach, and where he did preach with very great success. But to follow the Father of Methodism for the next forty-seven years through all his journeys, his labours, his sufferings and his successes; to tell you all the places he visited, and all the things which took place in his wonderful history, would make this book much too large. My hope is, that when you have read this book, you will all want to read his *Journals*,* in which you will find an account of most of the places he visited, and the good that was done. Perhaps no man, except St. Paul, ever travelled so many miles, or preached so many sermons as Mr. Wesley.

I shall now only be able to tell you a very few of the many things you will read in the *Journals*, for he was travelling every year through most parts of England, Wales, Ireland, and Scotland; preaching everywhere three or four times a day, forming societies, building chapels, and

* The Journals are now published by the Book Room in four editions: the Standard Edition in 4 vols., 8vo.; the Condensed Edition in 2 vols, 8vo.; a Students' Edition in 1 vol.; and a Selection, profusely illustrated, entitled: "Wesley His Own Biographer."—ED.

doing all he could to bring poor sinners to Christ. Neither cold nor rain, snow nor wind, could stop him. In the coldest weather he took some of his longest journeys, and often preached out of doors in the winter as well as in the summer. Sometimes he was treated very badly; but he was always happy wherever he was, or in whatever he had to suffer. In Manchester, when the mob brought out the fire engine to play upon him after he had done preaching; at Plymouth, when the whole dock was

MR. BLACKWELL'S HOUSE, LEWISHAM.

in a very great uproar; or in Ireland, where the people were much set against him, you find him calm, never afraid, never returning evil for evil, but always good for evil to everybody.

In the autumn of the year 1753, from hard work and bad colds, Mr. Wesley became very ill. The doctor feared he would die of consumption. He stayed some time at Mr. Blackwell's at Lewisham, and then he removed to Hotwells, Bristol, where, by the blessing of God, and in answer to the prayers of thousands of good people, he got better. During this time he was not idle, though he could not preach.

He began to write the *Notes on the New Testament*, a book I should like you all to have.

At one time in his illness he thought himself about to die, and wrote these words to be put on his tombstone, fearing lest his friends should say too much about him:

HERE LIETH

THE BODY OF JOHN WESLEY,

A BRAND PLUCKED OUT OF THE BURNING;

WHO DIED OF A CONSUMPTION, IN THE FIFTY-

FIRST YEAR OF HIS AGE,

NOT LEAVING, AFTER HIS DEBTS ARE PAID,

TEN POUNDS BEHIND HIM.

PRAYING,

"GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME AN UNPROFITABLE SERVANT!"

But he was mercifully raised up to labour and to preach for thirty-seven years after this.

You will perhaps wonder what is the meaning of this epitaph. He remembered the fire; and also he knew that as a sinner he had deserved the fire of hell, from both of which God had saved him. As to the ten pounds, he gave away all he possibly could to the poor, and spent much in trying to do good to the bodies and souls of men.

As soon as he recovered, he began his work again, never tiring nor resting till the year 1775, when in the North of Ireland he had a very bad fever, and lay some days without knowing anything or anybody. This fever was brought on from his having slept on the ground in an orchard. He had done so many a time before this, but had not been injured by it. However, God was pleased again to restore him, and he was soon as well as ever, and went on with his work.

Some time after this, the officers of the Board of Taxes, thinking that he must be a very rich man, and therefore have a great deal of plate,—that is, gold and silver,—a return of which he had not made in the paper which they had sent to him, wrote a letter to him wishing him to do so. He took up his pen and wrote back to them this letter:

"SIRS, I have two silver tea spoons at London, and two at Bristol. This is all the plate which I have at present; and I shall not buy any more while so many around me want bread.

"I am, Sirs, your humble servant,

"JOHN WESLEY."

He fed the hungry and clothed the naked instead of spending his money upon himself.

In the year 1778, Mr. Wesley opened the City-road chapel, the old Foundery chapel having become too small. By this time Methodism had greatly increased. It had for some time been spreading in America, and also among the poor negroes in the West Indies, as well as in other parts of the world.

In this year also, Mr. Wesley published the first number of the *Arminian*, or, as it is now called, *The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, which has been published ever since. In its volumes you will find many pleasing things about early Methodism and the first preachers, and the good old Methodists.

MR. WESLEY HELPING A POOR WOMAN.

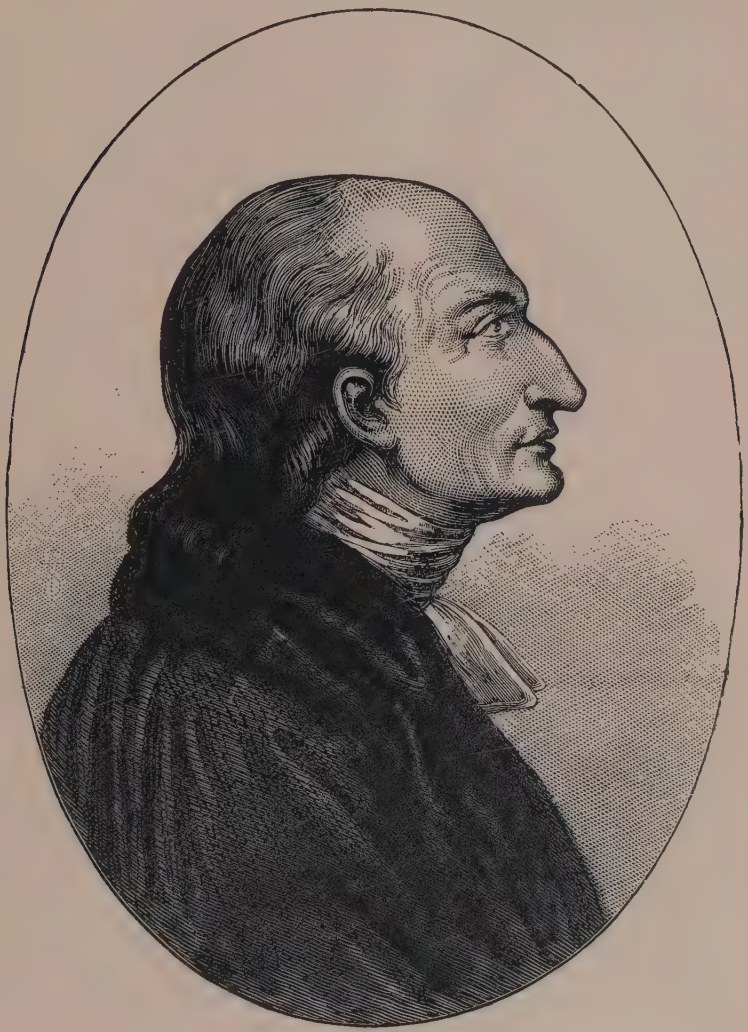
And perhaps here I should tell you that the Father of Methodism was much helped in his great and blessed work by several clergymen of the Church of England. There was the Rev. George Whitefield, who began with him and his brother Charles, the Rev. Vincent Perronet, of Shoreham, in Kent, to whom he and his brother looked up as their father. Then there was the good Mr. Grimshaw, of

Haworth, in Yorkshire; one of the most hard working ministers in the world, who for many years preached sometimes twenty times in a

REV. GEORGE WHITEFIELD.

week, and sometimes thirty, and died a Methodist preacher. And the holy Mr. Fletcher, of Madeley, in Shropshire, who by his writings and preaching was a very great help to Mr. Wesley. And the excellent

Dr. Coke, whom we must not forget; he should be called The Father of Wesleyan Missions, for he crossed the Atlantic Ocean eighteen



REV. JOHN FLETCHER.

times, and died when on his way with six missionaries to the East Indies, in the month of May, 1814. His remains were committed to the great deep, where they rest until the sea shall give up her dead.

There were a few other clergymen who also helped Mr. Wesley,

with many great and good men, who have long since joined him in

DR. COKE, AND THE MEMORIAL SCHOOLS AT BRECON.

that better world, where "they rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

ELIZABETH CASTLE, JERSEY.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE AGED MINISTER STILL AT HIS WORK.

"In a rapture of joy, My life I employ,
The God of my life to proclaim;
'Tis worth living for this, To administer bliss
And salvation in Jesus' name."

IN the year 1783, Mr. Wesley paid a visit to Holland. And very delightful it is to see the aged minister travelling by land and by sea, just like a young man, and preaching with as much strength as ever. He spent his eightieth birthday in Holland. He writes: "I have this day lived fourscore years; and, by the mercy of God, my eyes are not waxed dim; and what little strength of body or mind I had thirty years ago, just the same I have now. God grant I may never live to be useless; rather may I

'My body with my charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live.'"

The late Rev. Henry Moore, who knew him well, says that during the last years of his life he was "a wonder to many." Although upwards of eighty years of age, he travelled, wrote, preached, and worked, just as though he had been a young man: rising at four o'clock every morning, preaching at five, riding thirty, sixty or seventy miles, besides preaching three, four, and sometimes five times in a day.

Soon after his return from Holland, he visited Ireland again, where he preached, often out of doors, to very large congregations, and much good was done. From Dublin, where he was joined by Dr. Coke, who had just come back from America, he came on to Manchester, and then to Bolton, where he says: "Here are eight hundred poor children taught in our Sunday-schools, by about eighty masters (teachers) who receive no pay but what they receive from their great Master. About a hundred of them, part boys and part girls, are taught to sing; and they sang so true, that, all singing together, they seemed to be but one voice." In the evening many of the children came round him, when he wished them to come into the house and sing

"Vital spark of heavenly flame,"

which they did; but many of them could not sing for weeping. Mr. Wesley was much delighted with them, and said that he "believed their singing could not be equalled in the King's chapel." With what pleasure would he have listened to you in your schools when you sing, had he been living now!

After this he visited the islands of Guernsey and Jersey; then Cornwall, where he preached in the fields and market-places, and in the great amphitheatre, or pit, of Gwennap, to many thousands, who could all hear him although he was so aged.

When he was eighty-five years old, he writes: "I this day enter on my eighty-fifth year. And what cause have I to praise God, as for a thousand spiritual blessings, so for bodily blessings also! How little have I suffered yet by 'the rush of numerous years!' . . . I do not run or walk so fast as I did; my sight is a little decayed; . . . I do not feel any such thing as weariness either in travelling or preaching. I can write sermons as readily and correctly, I believe, as ever. To what cause can I impute this? First, to the power of God fitting me for the work to which I am called. And next to the prayers of His children. And also to inferior means:

"1. To my constant exercise and change of air.

"2. To my never having lost a night's sleep, sick or well, at land or sea, since I was born.

"3. To my having sleep at command; so that whenever I feel myself almost worn out, I call it and it comes, day or night.

"4. To my having constantly, for above sixty years, risen at four in the morning.

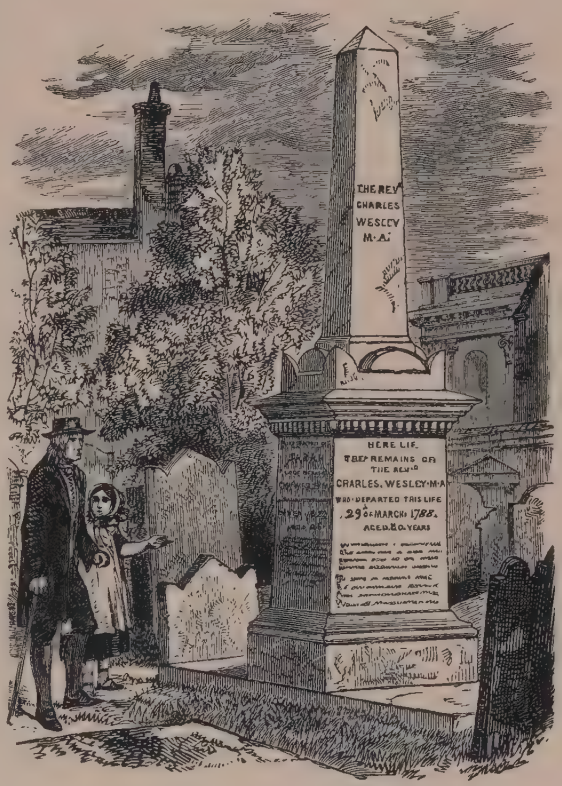
"5. To my constant preaching at five in the morning for above fifty years.

"6. To my having had so little pain in my life; and so little sorrow, or anxious care.

"Even now, though I find pain daily in my eye or temple, it seldom lasts many minutes at a time."

Some people had pretended to say that this would be the last year of his life, of which he says: "I am not careful about it; I hope it will be the best."

On March 29th, 1788, his dear brother, the Rev. Charles Wesley, died, aged seventy-nine years. He had long laboured with his brother; and although very weak and poorly in his body, he was peaceful and happy in his soul, and died in the blessed hope of eternal glory through Jesus Christ our Lord. Mr. Charles Wesley wrote most of the hymns in our Hymn-Book. After the death of his brother, Mr. Wesley still worked as hard as ever he had done.



REV. CHARLES WESLEY'S GRAVE.

When entering on his eighty-seventh year he was in Ireland, and he writes: "This day I enter on my eighty-seventh year. I now find I grow old. My sight is decayed; so that I cannot read small print, unless in a strong light. My strength is decayed; so that I walk much slower than I did some years since. My memory of names is decayed; till I stop a little to recollect them." Yet still he was ever about his "Father's business."

After holding the Conference in Ireland, and then in Leeds, he returned to London; from thence he set out for Bristol; and then

through the West of England to Cornwall. At Falmouth, where he preached, among many other places in Cornwall, he says: "The last time I was here, above forty years ago, I was taken prisoner by an immense mob, gaping and roaring like lions; but how is the tide turned! High and low now lined the street, from one end of the town to the other, out of stark love and kindness, gaping and staring as if the king were going by." In the evening he preached on the top of a hill near the sea "to the largest congregation" he had ever preached to in Cornwall.

In the early part of the next year, 1790, we find him again at Bristol, Birmingham, Wednesbury, and Madeley, at which place he says: "I finished my sermon on the Wedding Garment; perhaps the last that I shall write. My eyes are now waxed dim; my natural force is abated. However, while I can, I would fain do a little for God before I drop into the dust."

After this he visited Cheshire, Lancashire, Newcastle, and Hull, with many other places in Yorkshire, and then Epworth once more. At Newcastle, the Orphan House was very much crowded, so that he would have preached out of doors but the rain would not allow of it. In the evening of Tuesday, June 8th, he preached, for the last time in his favourite Orphan House, to about six or seven hundred of the Sunday-school children, from the words: "Come ye, children, hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord." How delightful to see the dear aged minister "feeding the lambs!" And they could all understand him, for he was so simple and talked so sweetly to them. Surely they would never forget it!

He travelled and preached till he came to Bristol, to be present at the Conference of 1790. This was the last that he attended, making the forty-seventh. After having visited as usual many places, he returned to London, preaching till February, 1791, as much as ever, and praying: "Lord, let me not live to be useless."

An account of his last days you will find in the next chapter.

Perhaps you would like to know what kind of a man he was to look at? He was a little man, but very active; he had a very fine face, and though he was so old, it was beautifully smooth and clear: his eyes were very bright, and he was always cheerful. His dress was neat; and he was always very clean. He had in his house *a place for everything, and he put everything in its proper place.* His bedroom and his study were always in order. He was never in a hurry; and was always ready to leave his home at any time for the longest journey. He never wasted a moment's time. He lived and worked by rule; and this is the reason he was able to do so very much good. Try and be like him.

MR. WESLEY PREACHING HIS LAST SERMON.

MR. WESLEY WRITING HIS LAST LETTER.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAST DAYS OF THE FATHER OF METHODISM; AND THE STATE OF METHODISM AT HIS DEATH.

"My remnant of days I spend in His praise,
Who died the whole world to redeem;
Be they many or few, My days are His due,
And they all are devoted to Him."

THIS was really true, for the last days of his life, as well as the first, were fully devoted to the service of God. He preached as usual in many places in London and the neighbourhood, meeting the societies after preaching in every place, and exhorting them "to love as brethren; to fear God, and honour the king;" and closed each meeting by giving out these lines:

"O that without a lingering groan,
I may the welcome word receive;
My body with my charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live."

In this way he went on till the time came for him to leave London and take his usual journey through Ireland or Scotland. He sent his chaise and horses before him to Bristol, and took places for himself and his friend, Mr. Bradford (who travelled with him), in the Bath coach; but his strength was gone, and he was obliged to give up the hope of taking the journey.

On Thursday, February 17th, 1791, he preached at Lambeth, but

on his return seemed to have taken cold. The next day he read and wrote as usual, and preached in the evening at Chelsea, from: "The king's business requireth haste;" but he had to stop two or three times owing to his cold. On Saturday he was better; but on the Sunday he was unable to do his Sabbath day's work, though he rose early as usual.

On the Tuesday he went on with his work, and preached in the evening in City-road chapel, and was much better than he had been for some days.

On Wednesday, February 23rd, he went to Leatherhead, and preached from these words: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near." And this was his last sermon. Here ended the public labours of that great and good man who had preached so many thousands of times.

Thursday he spent with some friends at Balham, and appeared nearly as cheerful and as well as usual.

On Friday he returned home, but was so feeble that his friends began to be afraid for him. When Dr. Whitehead came to see him, he said in a cheerful voice: "Doctor, they are more afraid than hurt."

On Sunday morning he seemed much better, got up and took a cup of tea. While sitting in his chair he looked quite cheerful, and repeated a part of one of his brother Charles' hymns:

"Till glad I lay this body down,
Thy servant, Lord, attend!
And O! my life of mercy crown
With a triumphant end."

Soon after, he said, with much feeling: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." He tried to say more, but was obliged to lie down. After having been quiet for some time, he said: "Speak to me; I cannot speak." When one in the room said: "Shall we pray with you, Sir?" he said: "Yes;" and while they prayed, he with all his soul said: "Amen." Soon after this he said: "There is no need of more; when at Bristol my words were:

'I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me!'"

One said to him: "Do you feel now as you felt then?"

He said: "Yes;" and while sitting up in the evening, he repeated the same lines again.

On Monday, February 28th, he was much weaker; he spoke but little, and slept most of the day. Once he said: "There is no way

into the holiest, but by the blood of Jesus." He had but a restless night. But on Tuesday morning he began singing:

"All glory to God in the sky!"

And after singing two verses his strength failed; then lying still as if to recover, he called for a pen and ink; but on trying to write he could not. A person in the room said:

"Let me write for you, Sir; tell me what you would say."

"Nothing, but that God is with us."

In the forenoon he said: "I will get up;" and while they were getting his clothes ready, he broke out singing in a way which astonished all present:

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers;
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures!"

While he was sitting in his chair, he said: "Lord, Thou givest strength to those that can speak, and to those who cannot. Speak, Lord, to all our hearts, and let them know that Thou loosest our tongues." He then sang:

"To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Who sweetly all agree."

Here his voice failed, and after gasping for breath a little, he said: "We have done all." He was then laid in bed, from which he rose no more.

He then gave orders about his funeral. While one of the preachers was praying with him, and beseeching God that when their father was taken to his eternal rest Methodism might be preserved, increased, and become a greater blessing than ever to the world, he with much fervour said: "Amen." On their rising from their knees, he took them all by the hand, and with much sweetness said to each of them: "Farewell! Farewell!"

A little after this, a person coming into the room, he tried to speak, but could not. In a short time after, he cried out with all his strength, "THE BEST OF ALL IS, GOD IS WITH US!" then lifting up his dying arm in token of victory, and raising his feeble voice with holy triumph, he again said: "THE BEST OF ALL IS, GOD IS WITH US."

When his parched lips were wetted, he said: "We thank Thee, O Lord, for these and all Thy mercies; bless the Church and King; and grant us truth and peace through Jesus Christ our Lord, for ever and ever!" At another time he said: "He causeth His servants to lie down in peace;" and stopping a little he cried: "The clouds drop fatness;" and soon after: "The Lord is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge."

MR. WESLEY'S DEATH-BED.

During the night he tried many times to sing the hymn:

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath!"

but could only utter

"I'll praise—I'll praise!"

On Wednesday morning, March 2nd, the time came that he must die. Mr. Bradford, his faithful friend, prayed with him; and the last word he was heard to say was: "Farewell!" A few minutes before ten o'clock, while his friends were all kneeling around his bed, without

a lingering groan, this man of God, this beloved minister of thousands, the Father of Methodism, entered into the joy of his Lord.

He was in the eighty-eighth year of his age, and had been sixty-five years a minister of the Gospel.

At the earnest wish of many of his friends, the body was placed in the City-road chapel. Crowds came to see it, and all were struck with the beauty of the face, and with the heavenly smile which was even then upon it.

Wednesday, March the 9th, was the day appointed for his funeral, but his friends feared that there would be such crowds at it, that they buried him between five and six o'clock in the morning, in a vault in the burying-ground of City-road chapel. But, though it was so early, some hundreds were present. When Mr. Richardson, who read the funeral service (he now lies with him in the same vault), came to "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother," he said, "OUR DEAR FATHER," and the whole congregation burst into loud weeping. They had indeed lost A FATHER.

MR. WESLEY'S TOMB.

In the City-road chapel there is a marble tablet to his memory. The tomb in the graveyard was built by the subscriptions of the Wesleyan ministers, at the celebration of the Centenary in the year 1839. Both of these I hope all of you may live to see for yourselves. And also the Wesley Memorial in Westminster Abbey.

I have now told you something about the life and labours of *The*

Father of Methodism. Very much more I could have told you about him but I feared making your book too large. Some years before his death, the Methodism which he had the honour to begin had spread through all Great Britain and Ireland, then to America, through the whole continent into Canada, the Leeward Islands and Newfoundland; and now to Australia and New Zealand. To know all his labours for between fifty and sixty years we must wait till the day of Judgment shall make them fully known.

It is supposed that he travelled between four and five thousand miles every year for more than fifty-two years, which will make nearly three hundred thousand miles; and preached between forty and fifty thousand sermons; besides all the addresses he gave, the hundreds of letters he wrote, and the many books he published.

You may ask, how did he do all this? The answer is this: He was never idle. When riding on horseback or in his carriage he always had a book in his hand. He made the most of his time at each place where he stayed. His rule was: *Never be unemployed; never be triflingly employed.* Surely, you will say: "He must have been a *good* man, as well as a *great* man, or he could not have done so very much good."

When Mr. Wesley died there were five hundred and eleven preachers, and one hundred and twenty thousand members in the Society. And at the Centenary, in 1839, when Methodism was just one hundred years old, there were three thousand four hundred and twelve preachers; and one million one hundred and twelve thousand, five hundred and nineteen members in all the world, and perhaps one million and a half of children in our Sunday-schools. "What hath God wrought!"

In the year 1902 the following were the latest procurable returns:

GENERAL STATISTICS OF METHODISM.

	Ministers.	Members (Including those on trial).
Wesleyan Methodists—		
Great Britain	2,238	583,617
Ireland	253	28,650
Foreign Missions	395	64,614
French Conference	37	1,646
South African Conference	202	93,660
West Indian Conferences	93	45,726
Methodist New Connexion	207	42,929
Independent Methodist Churches	397	8,644
Wesleyan Reform Union	18	7,849
Bible Christians	212	28,877

	Ministers.	Members (including those on trial).
Primitive Methodists	1,048	195,651
United Methodist Free Churches	444	93,684
Australasia—		
Methodist Church	932	131,774
United States—		
Methodist Episcopal	17,879	2,948,137
Union American Methodist Episcopal	125	15,500
African Methodist Episcopal	5,852	675,462
African Union Methodist Protestant	106	3,563
African Methodist Episcopal Zion	3,185	534,759
Methodist Protestant	1,647	184,097
Wesleyan Methodist	595	17,201
Methodist Episcopal (South)	6,227	1,470,520
Congregational Methodist	325	20,000
Congregational Methodist (coloured)	5	319
New Congregational Methodist	192	4,000
Zion Union Apostolic	30	2,346
Coloured Methodist Episcopal	2,061	204,972
Primitive Methodist	74	6,549
Free Methodist	922	27,292
Independent Methodist	8	2,569
Evangelist Missionary	48	2,010
Canada—		
Methodist Church	2,030	291,895
Totals	47,787	7,738,512

N.B.—Members of Junior Society and other similar Classes are included where such Classes exist. These Statistics do not include the numbers of worshippers and hearers in Methodism.

Let us be thankful to God for raising up JOHN WESLEY to be "The Father of Methodism;" and let me earnestly hope that every one of you, my dear children, will now say with all your hearts: "THIS PEOPLE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE, AND THEIR GOD SHALL BE MY GOD."

Do so—for Methodism has been a blessing to your parents, to your country, to the world, and to thousands of happy saints now around the throne of God in heaven. And we earnestly hope and pray that it may be made a blessing to you, and to millions yet unborn.

CHAPTER X.

THE FATHER OF METHODISM WORTHY OUR IMITATION.

"All honour and praise To the Father of grace,
To the Spirit, and Son, I return;
The business pursue He hath made me to do,
And rejoice that I ever was born."

MY dear young readers, you have now read something about the sayings and doings of the Father of Methodism, and I almost think I hear you saying: We will try our best to be like him. The life of such a man ought to be carefully read and prayerfully studied by all our young people; because from the lives of good men we learn what great care God takes of those who love Him; and we learn also what we ought to be.

If you have attentively read and will try to remember what I have told you about Mr. Wesley, you will never be at a loss to know what to do to please God.

And to help you in this, ask your parents or your friends to buy you a few maps of England, America, and other places; and then it will be a very delightful task to place your finger upon the different roads which Mr. Wesley travelled, in his journeys from London to Bristol; from Bristol to Cornwall; and from Cornwall to Yorkshire. You will find Leeds, and near to it the place where good John Nelson was born. Then you may go on to Newcastle, where the Orphan House was built, and where Mr. Wesley preached to the dear children. You will also find Epworth, where he was born; and Oxford, where Methodism had its rise. Then you may look at Ireland, and Scotland, and Wales; and you will scarcely be able to point to a single road, on any of these maps,

over which he did not travel again and again in trying to do good. And you must remember that in those days there were neither railways nor steamboats; but only slow sailing ships, saddle horses and stage coaches.

Then you will find Germany, and think of Peter Böhler, and the good Moravians at Herrnhuth. And then America, where he safely landed after the storm at sea, and talked with the poor Indians, very ignorant of Jesus Christ and His blessed Gospel.

When you look at other maps, you will see great countries which Mr. Wesley never visited: but Methodism has found its way to most of them. There is Africa, India, China, Australia, and Fiji; and surely you will pray that soon every country in the world may have the Gospel, and you will do all in your power to send it to them.

But I must tell you in what things I wish you to imitate Mr. Wesley.

He feared the Lord from his youth. Imitate him in this; begin now and God will bless you. He loved, honoured, and obeyed his parents. Imitate him in this. You know that God says: "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." Mr. Wesley did so; and was always careful to ask their advice, and to do all in his power to please them. He obeyed the command; and "his days were long upon the land." And what is more lovely than for young people to be obedient and affectionate to their best earthly friends? Pray that you may be so.

Mr. Wesley was always attentive to his books; and this was one reason why he knew so much, and was so well able to teach others.

But his greatness was not his learning alone. It was his goodness; this made him able to do so much good, and rendered him such a great blessing to others. In this try to be like him. Try to be *holy*, and then you will be *happy* and *useful*. He prayed much for this; and God listened to his prayers, and sent His good Spirit to teach him what to do; and in this way God will listen to you and bless you, if like him you pray to be made holy.

And after he became pious, by giving God his heart, he never forsook God, but spent the whole of his long life in His service and for His glory. O that you may try to imitate him in this also! For,

"Why should I say, 'Tis yet too soon
To seek for heaven, or think of death?'
A flower may fade before 'tis noon,
And I this day may lose my breath."

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You may not live as long as Mr. Wesley did, but you may be as holy and as happy as he was, if you fear and love God. Then say :

"Now, now, while my strength and my youth are in bloom,
Let me think what will serve me when sickness shall come,
And pray that my sins be forgiven ;
Let me read in good books, and believe and obey,
That when death turns me out of this palace of clay,
I may dwell in a palace in heaven."

All this Mr. Wesley did, and now he is gone to live in the "palace in heaven." And there are palaces waiting for you also. You have seen that he was quite ready to die, and very long before he died he was prepared if God had called him away ; and when called, how peaceful, how happy was his end. God was with him, and he is now with God.

Now in all Mr. Wesley said and did he aimed at God's glory. It was for this he rose so early, wrote so much, travelled so far, and preached so often. He only wanted to save souls, and to spread SCRIPTURAL CHRISTIANITY all over the earth. He could always say :

"The love of Christ doth me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men ;
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
To snatch them from the gaping grave."

For this he lived, not for his own happiness, but to make others happy. This he had the joy of doing for many, many years. And now he has the greater joy of joining with thousands upon thousands in that "Happy Land, where saints in glory stand," to sing the praises of God and the Lamb for ever and ever. Pray to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to make you *holy* and *wise*, then you will be *useful* and *happy* on earth, and happy for ever in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus says: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not ; for of such is the kingdom of God."

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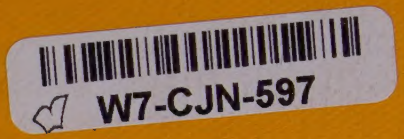
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